**Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services**

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UNFPA – Annual report of the Executive Director

# UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

## Report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in 2019

## Report of the Executive Director

*Summary*

In line with General Assembly resolution 59/267, this report provides a synopsis of UNFPA management responses to the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), and draws attention to specific recommendations directed to the legislative organs of the United Nations system organizations. It focuses on the eight JIU reports relevant to UNFPA issued and received since the last report to the Executive Board in 2019. Of the total 56 recommendations issued in those reports, 38 are addressed to UNFPA: 26 to UNFPA management and 12 to the legislative organs. The present report provides the UNFPA management responses to the relevant recommendations and includes an update of the implementation status of recommendations contained in the JIU reports issued in 2017 and 2018.

*Elements of a decision*

The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present report, including the management views to the 12 recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit intended for consideration by the Executive Board.

# I. Overview of Joint Inspection Unit reports and notes

1. The present report provides a summary of the eight reports issued by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), which are of relevance to UNFPA and were received since the previous report to the Executive Board [DP/FPA/2019/4 (Part II)].

(a) Strengthening Policy Research uptake in the context of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development (JIU/REP/2018/7)

(b) Review of the United Nations system-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (JIU/REP/2019/2)

(c) Review of the integration of disaster risk reduction in the work of the United Nations system in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (JIU/REP/2019/3)[1]

(d) Review of Change Management in the United Nations system organization (JIU/REP/2019/4)

(e) Managing cloud computing services in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2019/5)[2]

(f) Review of Audit and Oversight Committees in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2019/6)

(g) Review of the Management and Administration of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) (JIU/REP/2019/7)

(h) Review of staff exchange and similar inter-agency mobility measures in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2019/8).[3]

2. The management responses to the relevant recommendations in the JIU reports, including the recommendations for consideration by the legislative body, are provided below. Annex 1 to the present report provides a statistical summary of reports that are subject to the present reporting; annexes 2 and 3 provide information on the implementation status of recommendations and notes issued in 2018 and 2017, respectively; annex 4 contains an overview of the recommendations pertaining to the reports included in this report, relevant to UNFPA and directed to the governing body of UNFPA; and annex 5 outlines the topics of relevance for UNFPA in the JIU work programme for 2020.

# II. Synopsis and review of relevant Joint Inspection Unit reports and recommendations

## A. Strengthening policy research uptake in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (JIU/REP/2018/7)

3. The review intended to acknowledge the role of policy research as a unique asset of the United Nations system and to elevate its visibility in decision-making. The concluding report proposes ways to make research production and uptake more efficient and transparent. It represents the first-ever system-wide review on policy research uptake. The report offers evidence on the existing policies and institutional mechanisms, deficiencies and good practices and outlines ways for the United Nations system to produce and use research more effectively. A case study on migration illustrates the importance of interdisciplinary and collaborative research for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

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[1] Corresponding comments of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in preparation at the time of preparing this report.

[2] Ibidem.

[3] Ibidem.

4. The review examined the convergence of both internal and external factors that contributed, during the entire research cycle, to the quality and relevance of the final products, and to better relationship between the suppliers and the users of research.

5. Mapping and documenting how organizations produce internally policy research was the first area of interest. The review showed considerable variations in the way organizations comprehend and operationalize research activities. Among others, the review found that the quality assurance for policy research and uptake was not always consistent throughout organizations or integrated into the organizational strategic vision. There was insufficient clarity with respect to the categorization of various research products and suitable monitoring frameworks for capturing their use and relevance.

6. The other area of interest was the actual use by the United Nations system of research produced externally, by universities and other research entities. By consulting major academic networks, the report generated reflections and out-of-the-box insights on the existing challenges and possible solutions from independent perspectives.

7. The review recommended actions that were expected to enhance capacities for research uptake by further strengthening system-wide opportunities for collaborative research among United Nations organizations, on the one hand, and to make the best use of external knowledge resources and to build or consolidate partnerships with the academic and research communities, on the other hand.

8. Of the 12 recommendations contained in the report, 7 are of relevance to UNFPA. Six are addressed to the Executive Director (recommendations 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12) and one to the Executive Board (recommendation 9).

9. UNFPA aligns itself to the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) answer to the report (A/74/216/Add.1). UNFPA supports establishing means to report on the cost of research activities (recommendation 2), as well as conducting periodic assessments of research needs and potential suppliers, with the aim of strengthening its own long-term capacity while making systematic use of research produced by academia (recommendation 4). UNFPA will support CEB efforts in establishing a system-wide policy on open data access (recommendation 6); adopting policies and frameworks to stimulate capacity-building in research, including at national level (recommendation 7); and encouraging long-term partnerships with academic communities at the global, regional and national levels (recommendation 12). As part of the United Nations Network on Migration, UNFPA will contribute to the assessment of inter-agency collaboration on migration-related research projects (recommendation 8).

## B. Review of the United Nations system-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (JIU/REP/2019/2)

10. As requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/226, the Joint Inspection Unit undertook a system-wide evaluation of the effectiveness, value added and impact of the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women as a tool for performance monitoring and accountability.

11. The review covered the first phase of implementation of the System-wide Action Plan, from 2012-2017, which included 66 participating entities, reporting on 15 common performance indicators. Focusing on the institutional arrangements, processes and procedures, the review examined various performance monitoring and accountability mechanisms both system-wide and at the level of each reporting entity, as well as UN-Women for its role in facilitation and coordination. The JIU's assessment is that the System-wide Action Plan has proven to be an effective framework for tracking system-wide advancements towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and is a useful benchmark and catalyst for progress in most participating entities.

12. The recommendations made aim at enhancing credibility in the implementation of the Action Plan, increasing the ownership of reporting entities and reinforcing accountability by executive heads and governing bodies. Of the five recommendations included in the report, four are of relevance to UNFPA, with three addressed to the Executive Director (recommendation 1, 2 and 5) and one to the Executive Board (recommendation 4).

13.   UNFPA aligns itself to the CEB answer to the report (A/74/306/Add.1). UNFPA supports the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that ratings are accurate and supported by evidence (recommendation 1). As a member of the CEB, UNFPA will work its fellow members to undertake a comprehensive review of the results achieved during the first phase of the Action plan (recommendation 2). Further, UNFPA will support an independent assessment of effective progress, using the Action Plan as a benchmark (recommendation 5). UNFPA stands ready to support the Executive Board in reviewing the strategies and measures that UNFPA envisioned and communicated to UN-Women to improve compliance with the indicators of the Action Plan (recommendation 4).

## C.   Review of the integration of disaster risk reduction in the work of the United Nations system in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (JIU/REP/2019/3)

14.   The report contained a review of the work of the United Nations system entities focusing on inter-agency coordination and systemic coherence for a more effective and efficient implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the revised United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience. It analyses the extent to which the organizations had integrated the issue of disaster risk reduction in their corporate priorities, with regard to either normative or operational activities to implement their mandates.

15.   The review also assessed the level of engagement of the Joint Inspection Unit's participating organizations in contributing to the implementation of the three commitments of the United Nations Plan of Action, namely: (a) strengthening system-wide coherence in support of the Sendai Framework and other agreements through a risk informed and integrated approach; (b) building United Nations system capacity to deliver coordinated high-quality support to countries on disaster risk reduction; and (c) ensuring that disaster risk reduction remains a strategic priority for the organizations of the system.

16.   In the report, the Join Inspection Unit made three recommendations to accelerate implementation of the Sendai Framework and its related plan of action. Of these, one is addressed to the Executive Board (recommendation 1) and two to the Executive Head (recommendations 2 and 3).

17.   Regarding presenting a map of interlinkages between the UNFPA core mandate and disaster risk reduction, and reporting on progress made on the latter (recommendation 1), while supporting the aim in principle, UNFPA considers that the recommendation should be best addressed to the Executive Director, asking for disaster risk reduction to be included in corporate planning and cascaded throughout the organization via its enterprise risk management process. As to ensuring that the new generation of United Nations sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks systematically include disaster risk reduction as part of the common strategic plans of the country teams (recommendation 2), UNFPA notes that the guidelines to the framework (to which UNFPA contributed actively) already incorporate these aspects. At country level, UNFPA will support the inclusion, in United Nations country team plans, of dedicated capacity to implement risk-informed development activities and to report thereon to headquarters, including by monitoring the contribution to implementing the Sendai Framework (recommendation 3).

## D.   Review of change management in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2019/4)

18.   The review examined the concept and practice of change management in the United Nations system through the lens of organizational reform. It reveals how change management is understood, how it has been applied and to what effect.

19.   The review found a mixed picture of the understanding and application of change management across United Nations system organizations over the past decade. Based on 47 organizational reforms that carried out across 26 organizations during period 2010-2018, the review found that 20 percent had no evidence of change management in their design or implementation. By contrast, 33 percent of the reforms showed evidence of incorporating many

of the key elements of change management in their work. In short, those that did seek to incorporate change management comprehensively in their reform did so reasonably well.

20.  The report illustrated how the cultural and behavioural aspects of organizational change are critical. It reinforced that, if staff understand the benefits of change and what is in it for them, they are more likely to participate in the change and see that it is successfully adopted. The report revealed that several United Nations system organizations paid close attention to culture, behaviour and attitude as an integral part of their reforms. It concluded that it is critical to embed change management capacity in the organizational structure to play a role in coordinating reforms and building lessons over time.

21.  Overall, the review highlighted the significance of change management as a strategic priority worthy of consideration by governing bodies. It provided guidance to management on the critical elements of successful change management, and on how these can be applied in United Nations system organizations.

22.  The Inspectors made six recommendations – all of relevance to UNFPA – to ensure that change management approaches and methods are embedded in current and future organizational reforms. Of the six recommendations, one is addressed to the Executive Board (recommendation 1) and the other five to the Executive Director (recommendations 2, 3, 3, 4, 5 and 6).

23.  UNFPA aligns itself to the CEB answer to the report ([A/74/669/Add.1](#)). Regarding embedding change management approaches and methods in organizational reform and reporting thereon to the Executive Board (recommendation 1), UNFPA provides the Board, on a continuous basis, with information on the corporate approach and status of implementation of its change management efforts. Further, UNFPA has a dedicated structure in place in the Office of the Executive Director to provide oversight, coordinate and provide advice on change management (recommendation 2), with dedicated resources and a clear result framework which is monitored (recommendation 4). UNFPA notes, however, that the quadrennial budget format 2018-2021 poses some challenges as no line was dedicated to change management and resources therefor could not be foreseen when developing the budget in 2017. As to developing and standardizing global staff survey across the United nations system (recommendation 3), UNFPA considers that there should be a balance between standardized elements and organization-specific ones to cater to the particular needs of the organization surveyed. While recognizing the preeminent role that strategic human resources management functions should play in promoting and fostering change (recommendation 5), UNFPA considers that the "tone at the top" is paramount to foster change; so is the coherent and seamless interplay of all units involved in change management, including, but not limited, to the human resources management function. UNFPA seeks the benefits of harnessing the collective knowledge of the United Nations system, including through discussions at the High Level Committee on Management on how to support the United Nations Laboratory for Organizational Change and Knowledge (recommendation 6).

## E.  **Managing cloud computing services in the United Nations system ([JIU/REP/2019/5](#))**

24.  The term "cloud computing" describes the provision of computing services from a distant source through a network, often including the Internet. The use of cloud computing systems has grown considerably in the past decade and almost all United Nations organizations are using a variety of cloud computing services, such as email, hosting of public websites, recruitment and talent management applications, and collaboration tools. The use of cloud computing technology not only provides cost benefits but also makes data accessible on different devices, including mobile devices, from any location and at any time. Cloud computing has many other potential benefits; however, it also comes with risks.

25.  The risks involved are qualitatively new and directly related to the distributed and shared nature of cloud computing. Such risks include issues related to data confidentiality and to the safeguarding of the provisions of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations (1946) and the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies (1947). Consequently, the risks need to be carefully assessed and balanced against the potential benefits when the introduction of cloud solutions is being contemplated.

26. In the report, the Inspectors argued for a more balanced approach in facing the potential benefits of the cloud, considering associated specific risks and the potential synergies from a United Nations system-wide perspective. They discussed the potential of the United Nations International Computing Centre, a specialized entity created precisely to serve the information and data processing needs of the United Nations system. The Inspectors proposed a number of additional safeguards and advice intended to expand the United Nations common knowledge on cloud computing, to increase the level of inter-agency cooperation and to strengthen the negotiating capacity of the United Nations organizations.

27. The report contains five recommendations, of which four are of relevance to UNFPA. One is addressed to the Executive Board (recommendation 2), one to the General Assembly (recommendation 5) and the other three to the Executive Director (recommendation 1, 3, and 4).

28. On a general note, UNFPA notes that the United Nations International Computing Centre is developing its expertise to reach the level of competencies provided by market players, and is an important vehicle to capitalize on the experience and competencies of all participating entities. UNFPA further notes that, in its recommendations, the report did not consider connectivity needs (in terms of availability, quality, and costs) nor the risks associated to increasing the use of cloud-based services for applications hitherto deployed locally.

29. UNFPA supports and is in the process of including in its business continuity plan measures to mitigate the risk of failure by cloud services providers (recommendation 1). UNFPA supports the periodic reviews of ICT strategies, including those for cloud computing services, to ensure their alignment with business needs and their value-for-money (recommendation 3). While UNFPA supports conducting a risk assessment when contracting ICT services, including cloud-based ones, such assessment should be wider than financial and technical risks, to include strategic aspects like dependency over a specific supplier or a specific platform (recommendation 4). UNFPA concurs with, and will work with the Executive Board, on the need to include in its financial strategies provisions to ensure the financial sustainability and return on investment in new technologies (recommendation 2). While understanding the importance of widening the vision of services provided by the United Nations International Computing Centre and improving on its governance structure, it is unclear why the General Assembly would have a more prominent role than the separate governing bodies of other clients of the Centre. To strengthen the Centre's role, it would be advisable to consider, for coordination, mechanisms like the High Level Committee on Management and its digital technologies network (recommendation 5).

## F. Review of audit and oversight committees in the United Nations system ([JIU/REP/2019/6](JIU/REP/2019/6))

30. The purpose of the review was to take stock of progress achieved in the establishment, mandates, scope and effective functioning of audit and oversight committees in light of the standards and principles of good practices in public sector audit committees and, more specifically, in the United Nations system. In summary, the main objectives were: to determine whether existing audit and oversight committees are adequately established and serving their purpose as originally envisaged in their terms of reference or charters; to assess the deviation from generally accepted standards and principles; to identify good practices and lessons learned; and to recommend implementation by the United Nations system organizations according to the specific needs and characteristics of the entities.

31. The analysis of the 18 audit and oversight committees of United Nations system organizations examined during this review revealed considerable progress over the last decade, with the scope, content, and quality of the terms of reference or charter of the committees having improved considerably. Notwithstanding this progress, the United Nations system still has some way to go to meet the 13 criteria for good practices for audit and oversight committees identified by the Joint Inspection Unit.

32. The report contains seven recommendations, all directed to the Executive Board.

33. UNFPA aligns itself to the CEB answer to the report ([A/74/670/Add.1](A/74/670/Add.1)). Regarding strengthening the independence and reporting lines of the audit and oversight committees to the governing body (recommendation 1), UNFPA notes that the Executive Board decided on the

provisions related to the UNFPA Oversight Advisory Committee (previously Audit Advisory Committee) in the UNFPA Oversight Policy, which was last revised and approved in January 2015. UNFPA notes that the terms of reference of the UNFPA Oversight Advisory Committee already cover (a) all internal oversight functions (ethics, evaluation, internal audit, anti-fraud and investigation); provisions related to (b) internal control framework and risk management; (c) the relevant skills and professional expertise of committee members (recommendations 2, 3, 4 and 5). The UNFPA Oversight Advisory Committee already undertakes a yearly self-assessment. While UNFPA concurs with undertaking independent performance assessments in principle, UNFPA considers applying a private-sector-like three-year external assessment cycle excessive when oversight functions follow a five-year cycle (recommendation 6). UNFPA notes that the terms of reference of its Oversight Advisory Committee are periodically reviewed and are amended as necessary to include emerging priorities and new challenges (recommendation 7).

34. On a general note, the report would have benefited from a more in-depth analysis of committees' structure and operating mode in relation to the various mandates, governance structures and oversight arrangements of United Nations system organizations, noting that indeed "one size does not fit all".

## G. Review of the management and administration of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) (JIU/REP/2019/7)

35. UNAIDS, established by the Economic and Social Council in 1994 as a joint and co-sponsored programme, serves as the primary entity responsible for stimulating and coordinating global efforts to end AIDS. UNAIDS is governed by the Programme Coordinating Board. The secretariat of UNAIDS is responsible for coordination and is led by the Executive Director.

36. The review focused on: (a) strategic and operational planning; (b) governance; (c) oversight and accountability; and (d) human resources management and administrative services. The review made eight formal recommendations, three addressed to the Board and five to the Executive Director, as well as 25 informal recommendations that are suggestions for improvement.

37. The Joint Inspection Unit concluded that a new long-term strategy was necessary for UNAIDS, which should reflect a structural analysis and an inclusive approach on how UNAIDS would meet its commitments regarding the 2030 Agenda. Governance of UNAIDS must be strengthened to bring UNAIDS into alignment with other United Nations system organizations and avoid reputational and financial setbacks.

38. The Joint Inspection Unit considered that the gaps in oversight and accountability must be addressed by reassessing critical functions such as audit and ethics, establishing a disciplined approach towards oversight reports, and fully exercising the Board's role in the oversight and accountability of UNAIDS and its secretariat. The Joint Inspection Unit further opined that the secretariat needs a more comprehensive strategy on human resources management that reflects the strategic direction of UNAIDS and is supported by consistent and transparent processes and procedures. While the joint and co-sponsored model of UNAIDS is unique and can offer valuable lessons for the United Nations reform, the gaps in governance, oversight and accountability that have generated several recommendations from different independent review bodies should be catalogued and addressed in a transparent way.

39. While the Joint Inspection Unit report focusses on the UNAIDS secretariat, it is also of interest to UNFPA as one of the co-sponsor organizations of the UNAIDS joint programme. UNFPA reaffirms its commitment to the UNAIDS joint programme and looks forward to working with the UNAIDS secretariat and other stakeholders to outline a process and approach for defining the post-2021 joint programme strategy. UNFPA also looks forward to working with the UNAIDS secretariat, the co-sponsors and other stakeholders, in clarifying the role of co-sponsor, in strengthening the governance and operational arrangements of the joint programme as well as its reporting requirements.

## H. Review of staff exchange and similar inter-agency mobility measures in the United Nations system organizations (**JIU/REP/2019/8**)

40. The concept of inter-agency mobility has been long prominent as a means of strengthening unity of purpose, a common culture, and shared values. However, the incidence of such mobility remains limited. Work on this issue within the United Nations system has focused on the administrative "rules of the game" through the 2012 Inter-Organization Agreement concerning Transfer, Secondment or Loan of Staff among the Organizations Applying the United Nations Common System of Salaries and Allowances. However, long-known barriers have not been addressed, and few of the undertakings made by CEB mechanisms have been carried forward. Most organizations neither encourage inter-agency mobility nor apply measures to show that they value it. At an operational level, the opportunistic application of the 2012 Agreement, driven largely by the desire to avoid assuming responsibility for financial liabilities, is eroding the functioning of the regime to the disadvantage of staff.

41. The review concluded that inter-agency mobility policies are not an adequate response to current needs. Inter-agency mobility is a small fragment of a larger human resources management puzzle; to focus on it as a free-standing issue leaves unanswered how it connects to human resources policies and strategies that improve organizational or United Nations system performance. At the root of this are limited organizational commitment to inter-organizational mobility, its disconnection from the strategic preoccupations of most organizations, the siloed, protective, inward and often duplicative nature of staff selection and assessment in the United Nations system, the analogous fragmentation of business operations, and the absence of a system "culture". An important consideration is how inter-agency mobility can support strategic objectives, such as the support for the 2030 Agenda, ongoing workforce transformation, and the need organizations express for exchanges with United Nations system actors. Clusters of willing organizations can and should develop mutually beneficial exchanges based on common thematic interest or geographic opportunity.

42. The report made 10 recommendations aimed at improving data to support decision-making, including the analysis of gender dimensions, articulating the business case for inter-agency mobility, strengthening the principled implementation of the 2012 Agreement and also to address gaps, fostering a system culture, making more transparent how all aspects of inter-agency mobility are handled within organizations, and enhancing accountability to Member States.

43. Of the 10 recommendations, 7 are of relevance to UNFPA and are all addressed to the Executive Director (recommendations 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9).

44. UNFPA welcomes the suggestion of harmonizing administrative procedures and practices concerning inter-agency mobility across the United Nations system to ensure common approaches, while taking into consideration available organizational resources (recommendation 2). UNFPA supports the principles of the 2012 agreement; however, for the agreement to work efficiently and effectively, and to avoid an imbalance in staff mobility, organizations should reciprocate on the release of staff members on secondment, instead of transfer, including to refrain from asking staff members to resign and join anew in cases where secondment or transfer is indeed an option (recommendation 3). UNFPA supports including procedures in the 2012 agreement regarding the handling of allegations of misconduct by staff who have moved to another organization, thereby formalizing existing practices at UNFPA (recommendation 4). UNFPA concurs with reviewing the business case for inter-agency mobility (recommendation 6), in particular to determine its effectiveness and to identify lessons learned and areas for improvement, as well as with assessing the impact of the United Nations leadership framework (recommendation 7). Regarding having all United Nations staff members compete equally for vacant positions (recommendation 8), UNFPA considers that, in light of Staff Regulation 4.4 and Staff Rule 4.10, the essence of providing internal candidates an advantage is to benefit from their technical expertise, institutional knowledge and experience of the organization and its mandate. Therefore, at present, it is not considered feasible to treat all United Nations common system staff members as internal candidates.

45.   As to how mutual recognition could overcome regulatory and procedural barriers to inter-agency mobility (recommendation 9), UNFPA considers that the matter should be best tackled through the United Nations reform and the business innovation group.

46.   Although not addressed to UNFPA, the organization will assist in providing any information needed for assessing the factors impacting the participation of women in inter-agency mobility (recommendation 5).

## III.   Status of UNFPA implementation of Joint Inspection Unit recommendations

47.   In accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/258, requesting the JIU to enhance dialogue with participating organizations to strengthen the implementation of its recommendations, the JIU requested information on the follow-up to its recommendations. Of all recommendations issued between 2011 and 2018, 226 (73 per cent) have been accepted; 34 (10 per cent) are either not accepted or not relevant; and 48 (17 per cent) are under consideration. Of those accepted, 156 (69 per cent) have been implemented and 70 (31 per cent) are under implementation or yet to start.

48.   Annexes 2 and 3 of the present report provide an update of the implementation status of the most recent recommendations issued, between 2017 and 2019.

49.   Of the 42 recommendations issued by the JIU in reports dated 2017 that are relevant to UNFPA, 19 recommendations (45 per cent) are under consideration, while 2 (5 per cent) have been implemented and 21 (50 per cent) are in progress or yet to be started.[4]

50.   Similarly, of the 29 recommendations of relevance to UNFPA issued in reports dated 2018 and considered in document DP/FPA/2019/4 (part II), 16 recommendations (55 per cent) have not been accepted or are under consideration, while 2 recommendations (7 per cent) have been implemented and 11 recommendations are in progress or to be started (38 per cent).

51.   Of the 38 recommendations of relevance to UNFPA issued in reports considered in the present report, 36 are under consideration and 2 are under implementation.

52.   Further details are provided in the web-based JIU follow-up system accessible to Member States.

53. UNFPA is committed to following up on the implementation of the remaining recommendations relevant to UNFPA and to continuing its contribution to the various JIU initiatives in the future.

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[4] Data retrieved as at end January 2020.

# ANNEXES

## Annex 1
## Summary of reports, note and management letters included in this report and of relevance to UNFPA

| Report symbol | Report title | Total recommen dations | Relevant to UNFPA | *Of which to governing bodies* | Implementation status of UNFPA relevant recommendations | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Not accepted | Under consider ation | Implem ented | In progress |
| JIU/REP/2018/7 | Strengthening policy research uptake in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | 12 | 7 | *1* | 0 | 6 | 0 | 1 |
| JIU/REP/2019/2 | Review of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women | 5 | 4 | *1* | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| JIU/REP/2019/3 | Review of the integration of disaster risk reduction in the work of the United Nations system in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | 3 | 3 | *1* | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| JIU/REP/2019/4 | Review of change management in United Nations system organizations | 6 | 6 | *1* | 0 | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| JIU/REP/2019/5 | Managing cloud computing services in the United Nations system | 5 | 4 | *1* | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| JIU/REP/2019/6 | Review of audit and oversight committees in the United Nations system | 7 | 7 | *7* | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| JIU/REP/2019/7 | Review of the management and the administration of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) | 8 | 0 | *0* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| JIU/REP/2019/8 | Review of staff exchange and similar inter-agency mobility measures in United Nations system organizations | 10 | 7 | *0* | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total in the report for 2019** | | **56** | **38** | ***12*** | **0** | **36** | **0** | **2** |

**The following JIU report dated 2019 is not relevant to UNFPA**:

JIU/REP/2019/1. Review of management and administration in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

## Annex 2
## Status of implementation of JIU recommendations dated 2018, as at 31 January 2019

| Report symbol | Report title | Total recommendations | Relevant to UNFPA | *Of which to governing bodies* | Implementation status of UNFPA relevant recommendations | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Not accepted | Under consideration | Implemented | In progress |
| JIU/REP/2018/1 | Review of internship programmes in the United Nations system | 7 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| JIU/REP/2018/2 | Progress report on the recommendations contained in the review of South-South and triangular cooperation in the United Nations system | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| JIU/REP/2018/4 | Review of whistle-blower policies and practices in the United Nations system organizations | 11 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| JIU/REP/2018/5 | Opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness in administrative support services by enhancing inter-agency cooperation | 10 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| JIU/REP/2018/6 | Enhancing accessibility for persons with disabilities to conferences and meetings of the United Nations system | 10 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 2 |
| **Total of 2018 reports reported in 2019** | | **40** | **29** | **4** | **1** | **15** | **2** | **11** |

**The following JIU reports dated 2018 are not relevant to UNFPA**:

JIU/REP/2018/3. Review of management and administration in the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)

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# Annex 3
# Status of implementation of JIU recommendations dated 2017, as at 31 January 2019

| Report symbol | Report name | Total recommendations | Relevant to UNFPA | *Of which to governing bodies* | Implementation status of UNFPA relevant recommendations | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Not accepted | Under consideration | Implemented | In progress |
| JIU/REP/2017/2 | Donor-led assessment of the United Nations system organizations | 6 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| JIU/REP/2017/3 | Review of air travel policies in the United Nations system: achieving efficiency gains and cost savings and enhancing harmonization | 9 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| JIU/REP/2017/5 | Outcome of the review of the follow-up to the Joint Inspection Unit reports and recommendations by the United Nations system organizations | 7 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| JIU/REP/2017/6 | Results-based management in the United Nations development system: Analysis of progress and policy effectiveness | 7 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| JIU/REP/2017/7 | Review of donor reporting requirements across the United Nations system | 7 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| JIU/REP/2017/8 | The United Nations system-private sector partnership arrangements in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | 12 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| JIU/REP/2017/9 | Review of mechanisms and policies addressing conflict of interest in the United Nations system | 6 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 2 |
| JIU/NOTE/2017/1 | Results-based management in the United Nations system; Description of a high-impact maturity model for managing and achieving results: benchmarking framework, stages of development and outcomes (JIU/NOTE/2017/1) | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| **Total for 2017 reports and notes** | | **56** | **42** | **10** | **0** | **19** | **2** | **21** |

**JIU reports issued in 2017, not relevant to UNFPA:**

JIU/REP/2017/1. Review of management and administration in the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

JIU/REP/2017/4. Review of management and administration in the Universal Postal Union (UPU)

# Annex 4
# Review of relevant Joint Inspection Unit recommendations for consideration by the Executive Board for 2020

| Recommendations | Management comments |
|---|---|
| **JIU/REP/2018/7 - Strengthening policy research uptake in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** | |
| **#9** The governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should take measures to ensure that commitments to inter-agency collaboration, including through the establishment of a global data knowledge platform and the facilitation of academic exchanges, as stipulated in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, are implemented by the end of 2020. | UNFPA supports the recommendation |
| **JIU/REP/2019/2 – Review of the United Nations system-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (JIU/REP/2019/2** | |
| **#4** The legislative and governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should review the UN-Women annual letter addressed to the executive management, accompanied by indications of strategies and measures envisioned by the executive heads to be undertaken to improve compliance with the indicators included in the System-wide Action Plan and their expected contribution to gender equality and the empowerment of women | UNFPA supports the recommendation. |
| **JIU/REP/2019/3 – Review of the integration of disaster risk reduction in the work of the United Nations system in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.** | |
| **#1** The governing bodies of the organizations of the United Nations system should request the secretariats of their organizations to present a map of interlinkages between the core mandate of their organizations and disaster risk reduction and report on the progress made on disaster risk reduction accordingly, using the specific guidance provided by the "Results Framework of the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience – guidance for monitoring and reporting on the progress of the implementation of the United Nations Plan for Action on disaster risk reduction". | UNFPA supports the recommendation. |
| **JIU/REP/2019/4 – Review of change management in the United Nations system organizations** | |
| **#1** Governing/legislative bodies are encouraged to ensure that executive heads embed change management approaches and methods in their organizational reforms and report on the results. | UNFPA notes that this is already under implementation. |

| JIU/REP/2019/5 – Managing cloud computing services in the United Nations system | |
|---|---|
| **#2** The governing bodies of the United Nations organizations should request the heads of their respective organizations to include provisions in their financial strategies that facilitate the adaptation, responsiveness and efficient use of operational expenditures and capital investments related to new technologies. | UNFPA supports the recommendation. |

| JIU/REP/2019/6 – Review of Audit and Oversight Committees in the United Nations system | |
|---|---|
| **#1** The legislative and/or governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations that have not already done so should ensure that the terms of reference or charter of their respective audit and oversight committees are revised and updated by the end of 2021 to include specific references to their independence and reporting line to their legislative and/or governing bodies. | UNFPA supports the recommendation. |
| **#2** The legislative and/or governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations that have not already done so should ensure that the terms of reference or charter of the audit and oversight committees of their respective organizations are revised to reflect all the internal oversight functions that are part of the responsibilities and activities of the committee, where applicable, by the end of 2021. | UNFPA notes that this is already being implemented. |
| **#3** The legislative and/or governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations that have not already done so should ensure that provisions regarding the internal control framework and risk management are included in the terms of reference or charter of their respective audit and oversight committees by the end of 2021 in order to ensure that due attention is paid to addressing internal control weaknesses and emerging risks. | UNFPA notes that this is already being implemented. |
| **#4** The legislative and/or governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations that have not already done so should give due consideration to including the oversight of ethics and anti-fraud activities in the revised terms of reference or charter of their audit and oversight committees in order to strengthen the accountability frameworks of their respective organizations by the end of 2021, provided that these audit and oversight committees meet the independence criteria. | UNFPA notes that this is already being implemented. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **#5** In order to meet the needs of the organizations, the legislative and/or governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations that have not already done so should consider revising and updating the terms of reference or charter of their audit and oversight committees to contain provisions related to the relevant skills and professional expertise of members, including a balanced mix of public and private sector experience at the senior level. In addition, a strong understanding of the structure and functioning of the United Nations system and/or intergovernmental and international organizations is desirable. | UNFPA notes that this is already being implemented. |
| **#6** The legislative and/or governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations that have not already done so should request their audit and oversight committees to undertake a self-assessment every year and an independent performance evaluation every three years and report to them on the results. | UNFPA notes that the UNFPA Oversight Advisory Committee is already undertaking a yearly self-assessment. As to independent performance assessments, while UNFPA concurs with the principle, it considers applying the private sector three-year external assessment cycle excessive when oversight functions follow a five-year cycle. |
| **#7** The legislative and/or governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations that have not already done so should ensure that the terms of reference or charter of their audit and oversight committees are periodically revised and updated with a view to including emerging priorities of, and new challenges to, their respective organizations. | UNFPA notes that this is already being implemented. |

# Annex 5
# Programme of work of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2020 as related to UNFPA

1.    Following system-wide consultations and suggestions, the Joint Inspection Unit identified six new topics in its programme of work for 2020 presented at the General Assembly together with its report for 2019.

2.    Overall, five system-wide topics are of interest to UNFPA, as indicated in the table below, and will be actively supported. A high level view of each topic is included below.

| Item | Title | Type |
|------|-------|------|
| 1. | Cybersecurity in the United Nations system organizations: a review of policies and practices (A.451) | System-wide |
| 2. | Sustainable and environmentally friendly policies, practices and facilities across the United Nations system organizations (A.452) | System-wide |
| 3. | The use of block chain applications in the United Nations system: a critical S.W.O.T. analysis (A.453) | System-wide |
| 4. | Comprehensive review of United Nations system support for the landlocked developing countries (LLDC) (A.454) | System-wide |
| 5. | Current state of the ethics function in the United Nations system (A.455) | System-wide |

**Summaries of projects in the programme of work for 2020**

## Cybersecurity in the United Nations system organizations: a review of policies and practices (A.451)

3.    According to the World Economic Forum, cybersecurity risks are growing, both in their prevalence and in their disruptive potential.[5] It is now one of the most significant risk management challenges facing virtually every type of organization, including international organizations. Cybersecurity is not just an information technology issue; it is a security issue and it is the responsibility of everyone in an organization. The cybersecurity risks have implications throughout an organization and its operations. Most organizations, including those of the United Nations system, are facing an increased level of cyber threats seeking to do harm to the organizations' personnel, assets, data, reputation and credibility.

4.    Organizations of the United Nations system have expressed their concern regarding cybersecurity, and several have brought this to the attention of the Joint Inspection Unit in the course of the preparation of the Unit's programme of work for 2020. Significantly, recognition of the cybersecurity risk was highlighted by the Independent Audit Advisory Committee in a formal proposal for a review that was submitted to the Unit.

5.    In this context, the review will assess how the United Nations system organizations are addressing this threat, the challenges and risks they face, including risk mitigation measures and, inter alia, relevant staff training and awareness initiatives. The review will identify opportunities for strengthening collaboration and coordination among organizations, leveraging existing capacities and opportunities, and identify good practices from organizations within the United Nations system as well as in other sectors.

## Sustainable and environmentally friendly policies, practices and facilities across the United Nations system organizations (A.452)

6.    The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasizes the imperative of incorporating sustainability concerns into the activities and operations of United Nations system organizations. The Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System, 2020–2030, endorsed by the Chief Executives Board

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[5] World Economic Forum, *The Global Risks Report 2018* (Geneva, 2018). Available from www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GRR18_Report.pdf.

for Coordination in May 2019, aims to align the internal operations of United Nations system organizations with the environmental elements of the 2030 Agenda. The review will examine the status and effectiveness of implementation of key system-wide initiatives in this area.

7.    The review proposes an assessment of how key management functions can be more effective in strengthening sustainability management internally, through the identification of gaps, good practices and remedial actions. It will examine the governance, accountability and oversight architecture in respect of sustainable and environmentally friendly policies, practices and facilities across the system. These include the legislative and regulatory frameworks, structures, standard operating procedures, due diligence measures and monitoring and reporting provisions.

8.    The review will seek to identify areas of weakness and critical gaps between aspirations and practices in relation to sustainable and environment-friendly policies, practices and facilities. It will also explore the commitment of the organizations' leadership and senior management to adapting rapidly to major decisions in this area, as well as their readiness to keep pace with technological advances and innovations to attain the set objectives. The review will also assess the potential reputational risks associated with the current policies and practices and identify the good practices and lessons learned from among the organizations in the United Nations system.

## The use of blockchain applications in the United Nations system: a critical SWOT analysis (A.453)

9.    The main goal of the Secretary-General's strategy on new technologies is to define how the United Nations system can support the use of digital technologies to accelerate the achievement of its mandates, in particular the 2030 Agenda. According to the same strategy, the United Nations system is committed to deepening its internal capacities and exposure to new technologies and to increase understanding, advocacy and dialogue around them.

10.    One of the most dynamic of the new technologies is blockchain, with its potential to diminish transaction costs, increase speed of operations, lower the risk of fraud and reduce the need for intermediaries. Blockchain is not a mere technology issue, but an operational option of strategic importance. The United Nations system should do more to understand and identify efficient uses enabled by blockchain, while managing associated risks. Several organizations already utilize blockchain applications on an experimental basis, while others need more knowledge and evidence to inform their decisions.

11.    The Joint Inspection Unit will undertake an independent, impartial and objective analysis with a view to identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) related to the use and relevance of blockchain applications for organizations in the United Nations system. The review will: (a) take stock of and assess the use of blockchain applications; (b) compile lessons learned during this phase of incipient development; (c) analyse the opportunities, challenges and risks related to the use of blockchain; (d) promote good practices; and (e) attempt to develop guidance and principles for the use of blockchain applications, focusing on those features that facilitate and stimulate greater inter-agency cooperation, coherence and efficiency.

## Comprehensive review of United Nations system support for the landlocked developing countries (A.454)

12.    The Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 targets the support for landlocked developing countries through six priorities areas: transit, infrastructure development, international trade and trade facilitation, regional integration and cooperation, structural economic transformation and means of implementation.

13.    The 2019 midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action concluded that progress was insufficient for landlocked developing countries to achieve the Programme targets. Consequently, in the Political Declaration of the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for

Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024,[6] the General Assembly called upon the United Nations system to provide the support necessary to accelerate the implementation of the Programme of Action and for the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to ensure coordinated follow-up, and effective monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Programme of Action.

14.    A review of the United Nations system support for landlocked developing countries was included in the programme of work of the Unit at the request of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. The review will build on the findings of the midterm review with a view to providing insight into the potential causes of stalled progress in the United Nation system entities' support for the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. The report will also outline remedial actions that can be taken in the short term to more effectively support landlocked developing countries in their implementation of the Programme priorities, within the remaining time frame. The findings of the review will further inform the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme.

## Current state of the ethics functions in the United Nations system (A.455)

15.    This review is a follow-up to the 2010 Joint Inspection Unit review on ethics in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2010/3). As such, the main objective of the review will be to assess not only the progress made by United Nations system organizations in strengthening their ethics function in line with the recommendations in the 2010 report, but also the application of commonly accepted norms and standards and the implementation of any relevant recommendations made in subsequent reviews of the Unit, as well as reports of other oversight bodies pertaining to the ethics function.

16.    The review will provide an updated view of the state of the ethics function, how it is situated in the different business models in the United Nations system organizations, including how the independence of the ethics function is ensured. Furthermore, the review will examine what has changed in the ethics function since the 2010 report, including the specific roles and responsibilities for ethics in the United Nations system organizations. The Unit will maximize the United Nations system-wide scope of the review to identify any good practices and benchmarks that could be shared, as well as any opportunities that may exist for organizations to collaborate to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the ethics function.

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[6] General Assembly resolution 74/15.